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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **NATIONWIDE FLU VACCINE DELAY SHIFTS CLINICS TO NOVEMBER**

The Monroe County Health Department, members of the Flu Coalition, and the Monroe County Medical Society, announced today at a news conference that as a result of a nationwide delay in the availability of flu vaccine, clinics held in supermarkets and other public locations will be delayed until November.

A new flu shot is developed each year based upon the strains of flu expected to be circulating. Vaccine manufacturers have experienced difficulty in producing this year's vaccine resulting in the delay.

Once the vaccine becomes available, a 'phased-approach' will be implemented whereby people who are at the highest risk of complications from the flu will be immunized first. Physicians in private practice are being encouraged to follow this approach to better ensure that the oldest and least healthy residents in Monroe County are protected from the flu.

During Phase 1, "high-risk" individuals will receive a flu shot. High risk groups include:

- People with a chronic illness such as diabetes, weakened immune systems, or heart, lung, kidney or HIV disease
- People 65 and over
- Health care workers providing direct patient care
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities
- Pregnant women in their second or third trimester during the flu season

Lower risk individuals (Phase 2), including people aged 50-64 and household members of people in the high-risk category, will be given flu shots later. Flu shots are beneficial throughout the flu season. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is expected to provide additional guidance on the availability and supply of flu vaccine within the next several weeks.

The Monroe County Health Department is coordinating a broad community effort including on-going communication with the business community, health insurers, hospitals, laboratories and infectious disease experts to prepare for the delay in flu vaccine.

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Influenza, or flu, is a respiratory illness that is easily spread from person to person. Symptoms include: fever, sore throat, muscle ache, chills and headache. Flu season usually extends from November – April. Approximately 20,000 individuals die from flu or its complications each year in the United States.

Preventive measures encouraged to reduce the risk of contracting the flu include:

- Pneumonia vaccine if age 65 or over or with chronic illness to prevent the most common and severe complications from the flu
- Stay home if ill with respiratory symptoms to prevent exposing others
- Cover mouth when sneezing or coughing
- Thorough and frequent hand washing with soap and water

The Flu Coalition is comprised of: Monroe County Departments of Health and Aging, Visiting Nurse Service of Rochester, Via Health Home Care, Wegmans, Independent Nursing Care (INC) and the New York State Health Department.

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